

Philosophy of Music Education
Martin Spicer
March 2007

As music educators, we should know the importance of music and the impact of it on the lives of everyone. Our lives would not be the same without music, so it is important that we bring music to all children while they are young so they have more of their lives to enjoy and grow in it. Because of the importance and benefits of music, dedicated music teachers are needed in all schools so every student has an opportunity to receive a quality music education.

It is very important that everyone has an opportunity to receive a music education because of all the musical and non-musical benefits. There are too many people in the world that can not do much more with music than listening to it for recreation. Recreational listening is a great gift, but music has so much more to offer. By educating students through active listening, performing, and creating, so much more can be learned so that students can come to a more full understanding of music. It is our job as music educators to help students come to a more full understanding of music, so that they too can be well rounded individuals.

Because music has so much to offer, it is important that every child has the opportunity to receive a music education in every school. I believe in the philosophy of “music for every child.” Every school needs music classes that are available for all students to learn music, including learning disabled students. It is sad that many special learners only have “occasional” musical experiences. Students are sometimes just placed in the music classroom to give the paraprofessionals or special educators a break. Other times, they are not placed in a music classroom because the music teachers have rejected them or have not actively reached out to them. They need to be placed in a music classroom on a regular basis so they can advance in their music education. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is also the law according to the

Americans with Disabilities Act and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act*. According to the law, all students must have access to general ensembles that are available for all students, and they must be placed in the “least restrictive environment”.

In order to have quality and well-rounded music classes, students should be allowed opportunities to study a wide variety of music in schools. Past and present music of our homeland and music of the world should be studied. By teaching music of the world, and showing the similarities and differences of different cultures, we can help students come to a better understanding of different cultures, so that they have respect for different cultures around the world.

When teaching music of other cultures, we must first look at philosophies of other cultures. We must be aware that it may be offensive for some music to be used in a classroom, since it may be part of a sacred ritual, and it may be offensive for us to use that music in our classroom. When teaching about a certain multicultural unit, it is important that we thoroughly research the multicultural topic before we teach it. We can research as much as we can on our own, but the best resource is somebody real representing the culture to be taught. This way we know what we can teach, can't teach, and clearly know what information in the textbook is valid.

Once we have the philosophy down of the cultures that we are going to teach, we can teach and use music as a tool; to teach about the culture. So much of each culture can be learned through music. People of cultures come together to make music to express their religion, troubles, and joy of everyday life. All cultures have music of some kind, and by teaching the music, we can expand into many areas of background and history of that culture.

When teaching music, teachers must continually assess their students. They must first organize their class so they know how and what they are assessing. Then, the students have to be

given clear objectives so they know what they are striving for, as opposed to waiting till the end of a grading period to tell the student how they are doing. Throughout the grading period, it is the teacher's job to monitor the progress of the student through assessment. If the teacher sees that a student is falling behind in something, the teacher should help the student out. The student must be informed ahead of time of something he or she is having troubles with, so the situation can be dealt with before the grades are given.

With music, we are privileged to be able to authentically assess, in addition to other assessment strategies. Music students can do something real; they can play music, and we can test them by listening to them and critiquing them with a predetermined rubric. By listening to their music, we can find out if they learned certain rhythms, if they learned to phrase, if they can express dynamic changes, and much more. Of course, in the music classroom, not everything goes as planned, so informal assessment can be used also. The students may be struggling with a musical concept that the music teacher may notice, which was unexpected, so the music teacher will have to vary the lesson plan to deal with that problem.

For everything to happen in the music classroom, we need music teachers that have a desire to teach. Children need teachers that are excited about music so they can get excited about music. When teachers are having fun with teaching, students will have fun with learning. Also, a teacher must be able to communicate their ideas to students by performing well in examples and by giving clear explanations. He or she must have a desire to teach students and watch them grow. In addition to a desire to teach, a teacher must have background knowledge so he or she is confident in teaching students.

A music educator must also have a desire to build a successful music program. A music educator should be able to get students motivated to become proficient on their instrument or

voice. He or she should be positive with teaching their class, and have an understanding of why students are the way they are, so that students can be approached in the right way.

Basically, music education is about having enough dedicated music teachers who understand the importance of music education, so they can help all students come to a more complete understanding of music through proper organization and assessment. With dedicated and caring music educators, the future of music education looks outstanding, since more people will be educated in music that will have an appreciation for it and the world around them, so that life will be more enjoyable for everyone.